

[By David Taintor](#)

Rep. Peter Welch (D-VT) wants Libya to pay the U.S. back.

In a letter to President Obama released Saturday, Welch [wrote](#) , “We believe it is essential that Libya reimburse the American taxpayer for the cost of our participation in the NATO mission.”

Welch told TPM that repaying the U.S. would be a great way for Libya to build self-confidence and really “own their success,” adding that the oil-rich country has the financial resources to do so.

The chief deputy whip isn’t looking for a check immediately, though. After Muammar Qaddafi’s 42-year rule, Libya’s National Transitional Council has “a lot of work to do,” Welch said. It would be “premature” to suggest a timeline for repayment, he said. “But I think the acknowledgement that this will be done would be what I’m looking for.”

Welch said the repayment would create an enormous amount of “taxpayer goodwill” after a controversial decision by President Obama to participate in the NATO operation in Libya.

“Many Americans had reservations about (the mission),” Welch said. “All Americans would feel much better if tax dollars were repaid.”

The U.S. spent about \$2 billion on the Libya campaign — a flash in the pan compared to other U.S. military entanglements. But Welch said wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are in a different category because they were deemed issues of national security.

Paying back the U.S. isn’t a legal issue for Libya, Welch said, “but it’s a gesture of goodwill that would go a long way.”

Read Welch's letter [here](#) .